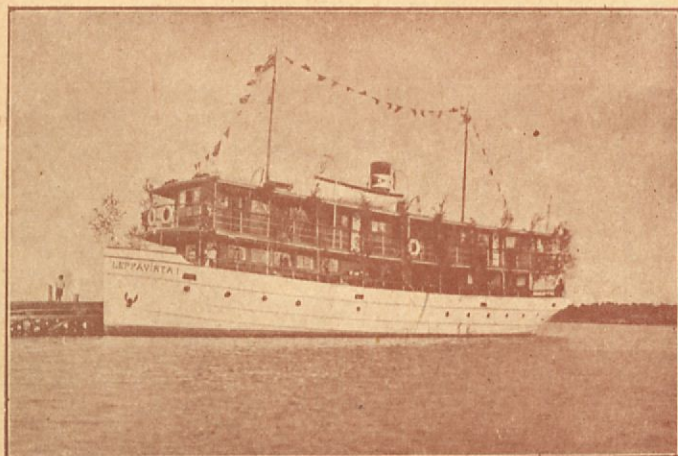


THE SAIMA DISTRICT

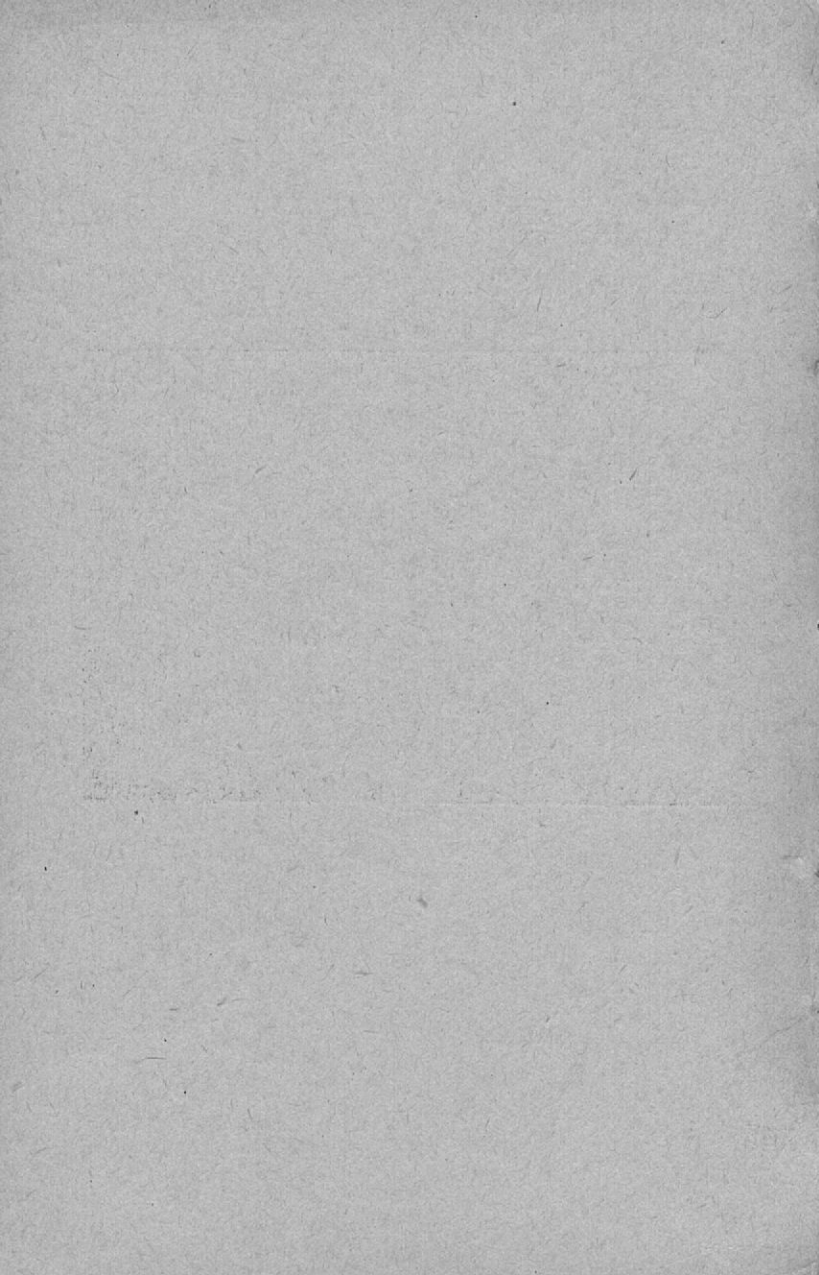
SAVONLINNA—KUOPIO



"THE PEARL OF SAIMA"

THE LEPPÄVIRTA ROUTE

EDITED BY THE KUOPIO SECTION OF THE
FINNISH TOURIST ASSOCIATION.



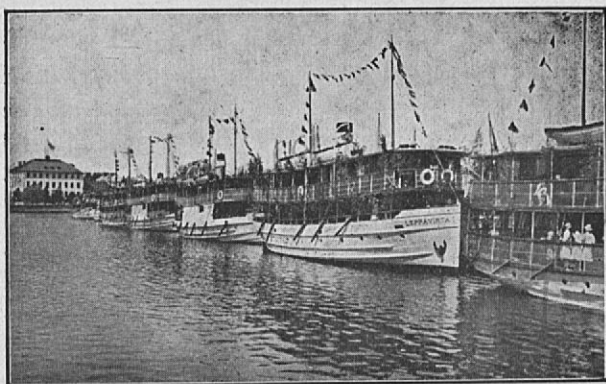
THE SAIMA DISTRICT

SAVONLINNA—KUOPIO
THE LEPPÄVIRTA ROUTE

EDITED BY THE KUOPIO SECTION OF THE FINNISH
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The harbour of Savonlinna

Finland does not offer the foreign tourist much in the way of historic monuments or famous art treasures, but she offers so much more in the way of beautiful scenery, the peace and pleasure of which comes from being in close contact with untouched nature. The beauty of the country lies especially in the extensive forests, and in the singular profusion of lakes. It is most apparent in the large lake district, and in the magnificent wa-

terways of Lake Saima. Here the admirer of nature and the tourist receives a never to be forgotten impression. Here the tourist, who has visited different parts of the country may exclaim: „The chain of the Saima lakes is the most wonderful thing I have ever seen; here is the northern paradise of hills, forests, and lakes.“

But as a boat trip along this chain of lakes, with its many branches extending for miles in all directions, demands too much of the tourist's precious time, he must satisfy himself by experiencing the best part of all by undertaking the journey from Savonlinna via Varkaus to Kuopio, from the border of Olof's Castle to the base of the stately Puijo Hill.

Savonlinna is an idyllic little town, charmingly picturesque, situated in the midst of nature. On account of its position, Savonlinna has developed into the most lively Summer tourist town of the entire Saima district. Besides the railway, there are navigable channels to Joensuu, Punkaharju, Imatra, Lappeenranta, Mikkeli, and two separate ones to Kuopio in the north. This pretty town, „the pearl of Savo“, which in 1639 received the rights of a corporate town, can boast of many things worth seeing, the most notable of which are the watering place with its gardens, and stately Olof's Castle, undoubtedly the most striking monument of the Middle Ages. The building of this town was begun in 1475.

We recommend this journey from south to north via Varkaus and Leppävirta. The well-equipped modern Saima steamers „Leppävirta I” and „Leppävirta II” accomplish this in 19 hours from 1 p. m. to 8 a. m., stopping and sleeping hours included. The cabins and arrangements on these steamers are above reproach, the restaurant famous for its excellent cuisine, and the employees are al-



Porosalmi sound at Rantasalmi

ways polite, thus adding much to the comfort of the tourist.

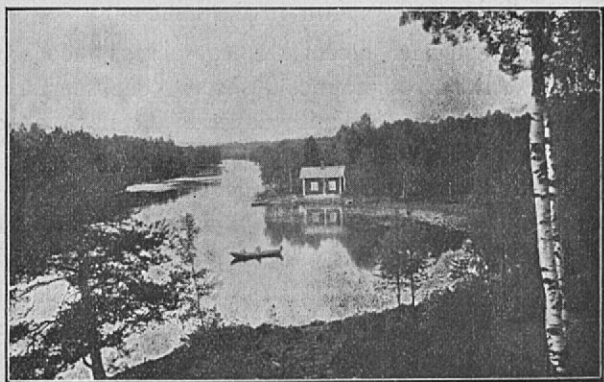
Having looked at the sights of Savonlinna, and the Castle, the tourist embarks on the spotlessly white and steady „Leppävirta” steamer, putting himself in charge of her friendly and jovial captain. From the pretty harbour the vessel pas-

ses into the Kyrönvirta stream, driven quickly past Olofs Castle which stands on a rock, a proud monument of times gone by. The Castle as well as the railway bridge, are both in their way exponents of human creative power. These constructions, — there is a difference of more than 400 years in their age, — look at one another in surprise. The steamer, on her northward course passes under the bridge, and on into the island-dotted lake of Haapavesi glittering in the sunshine; then through the Märanne sound to Haukivesi, an archipelago 30 miles in length. At this point the steamer turns from the main waterway to the left, keeping to the shore of Rantasalmi parish. At times she passes through narrow channels between steep islands; at times through wide waters, mirror-like in midsummer, and bordered by low and leafy islands. In the distance, to the west on the mainland can be seen uplands, cultivated fields, and villages; there is the high Parkuinmäki, a famous battle-field in 1789, where a monument within sight from the steamer, is to be erected shortly. At about 4 o'clock one arrives at the main pier of Mustalahti, in the parish of Rantasalmi, 3 kilometres from the church.

Rantasalmi became a parish in 1578. It is an old centre of civilization, where there are many large farms and old estates, of which Vaahersalo and Rouhiala with their own piers, have

been passed. At Rantasalmi in 1749—1787 there was the only higher institution of learning in Eastern Finland, a trivial school. The only military school of the country was here, at Haapaniemi, in 1781—1819.

From now onwards the country becomes more barren, but the naked rocks, and high forest-clad shores are beautiful in their wild surroundings.



Leppävirta seen from the Toivola villa

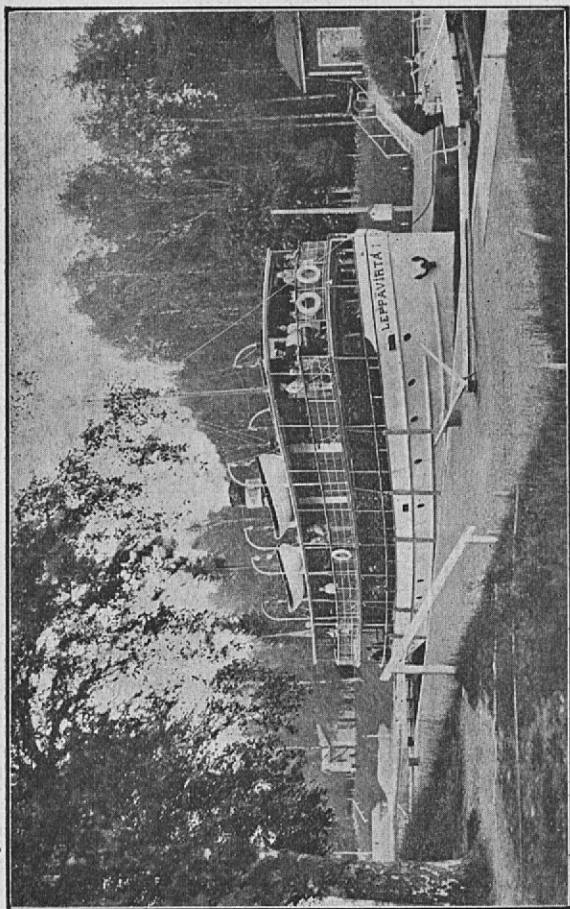
At first there is the pretty Porosalmi sound, round which a fairly large group of houses has gathered, then comes the western edge of earlier mentioned archipelago.

If the tourist had time to remain in the heart of Savo, he would find interest in the sturdy inha-

bitants of this primitive country; its flourishing islands abounding in woods, clear woodland pools, high hills, strange gorges and rock formations. But the cultivated fields are small, as the meagre ground does not give space for them.

The waters, on the other hand, have from time immemorial been known to abound in fish. Here in Haukivesi lives the large pike, and here the „muikku” (a species of whitefish), the favourite fish of the natives, spawn in the hollows.

The steamer steers her way across the deep waters between high rocky shores, one seamark, sighted far away, pointing towards the next, over the clear and glittering water, where innumerable tugs and tar-boats are passing one another. At Sianleuka there is an opportunity to see the activity of the raftsmen at their work, their timber crafts and shelters. The shore becomes lower here, the tall chimneys of the factories of Varkaus come in sight. It is now 8 p. m. and from the deep quiet of the country we come into the fiery pulsation of material life. The tourist notices at first the Lehtoniemi engine factories, and at the Varkaus pier may alight to make a hurried inspection of the factory community of the A. Ahlström Co., and have a glance at the Ämmäkoski rapids, abounding in salmon. Then he catches the steamer as she passes through the double locks of the Tai-



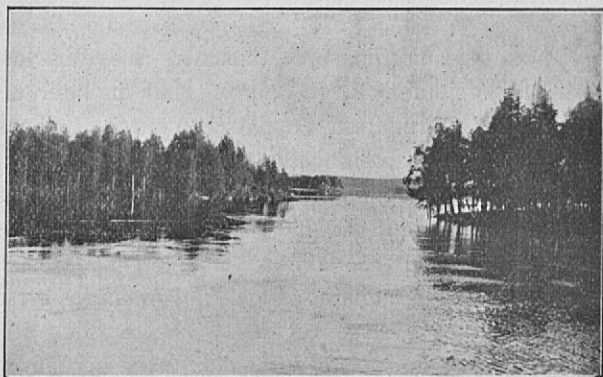
The Taipale canal at Varkaus

pale canal, where nature and man together have combined to form this useful whole.

We are now out of the parish of Rantasalmi, the Lehtoniemi factory, founded in 1888, being in that of Joroinen. At Varkaus we are again in a new parish, Leppävirta, and in a new province, that of Kuopio, as the province of Mikkeli ends here.

The narrow isthmus of Varkaus, cut in two by the rapids, was early found to be a suitable place for commerce and industry. Industrial activity began in 1818, when a mill and an iron works were established. Later on, came a sawmill, shipyard, and foundry. Varkaus in 1909 came into the hands of the present owners, the A. Ahlström Co., and since then new industrial establishments have been added, at quite an American speed. The shipyard is now the largest in the interior of the country, and from there originate most of the Saima's finest passenger steamers, among others, the „Leppävirta” ships. The sawmill industry has been tremendously enlarged, and a plywood factory added. Most imposing are the pulp mill, and the cellulose and paper factory: the export of the last mentioned amounting to almost one quarter of the whole export of the country. The arrangement of the factory, as well as that of the entire factory area, shows the great ideas and ingenuity of the owner, the visible results of which one is bound to admire. The Varkaus, or Taipale canal, constructed in 1835—1839, and completely rebuilt in 1867—1871, is 564 metres in length.

The canal has raised the steamer onto the upper waters, and the water-level now is almost 6 metres higher than at Haukivesi. As the evening becomes slightly darker, the steamer winds her way through narrow streams and canals to Unnukas „with its hundred islands and thousand peninsulas”. The water soon forces itself into a narrow stream and the most beautiful point of the trip is reached.



The mouth of Leppävirta

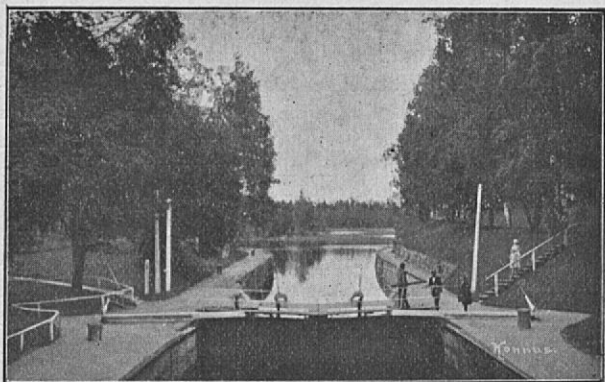
The country on the shores of Leppävirta is luxuriant, bright, and gay. The islands are rich in foliage, the forests and green fields stretch down to the water's edge. At 10 o'clock the steamer is fastened to the pier of Leppävirta church village, and remains there until 3,30 the next morning. Close by is the large church village, the beautiful position

of which can be judged from the top of the hill, or a still better picture of the settlement can be had from the belfry of the church.

Leppävirta was detached into a special parish in 1639, and had a church of its own the following year. The present church, the fourth of its kind, is made of grey stone, after the drawings of the famous C. L. Engel. It stands on a high hill (121 metres above water-level) and was built in 1846.

In the morning the steamer does the last part of the journey in 4 hours. Half an hour after the departure from Leppävirta church, Konnus is reached, famous for its beauty and splendid vegetation. Here the single lock of Konnus canal, 267 metres long (constructed in 1835—1839 and modernly reconstructed in 1865—1868) raises the steamer to Koirusvesi. The tourist ought not to sleep while passing through these regions. The morning sun flashes over the scene with a different light from that to be seen in the day-time and in the evening. A brisk wind ripples the surface of the Koirusvesi, Sotkaselkä and the more open Kallavesi. Monotony never tires the eye; there are rugged rocky islands, pleasant green bays, slender narrowness, and magnificent width, found in very few other places. In Kallavesi lofty islands, with pretty forests are to be seen, then undulating country part of which is more than 150 metres above the surface of

the lake. As we draw nearer, the white steeple of a white church becomes visible. The high hill is Puijo, and at its base lies the end of the journey, Kuopio. The capital of Savo expects to receive visitors, ready to show them newbeauties of nature, and to recommend new tourist routes either by water or by land in the country of forests, and of the thousand lakes.



The Konnus canal

Kuopio had its foundation charter in 1872. The town has been the home of a good many famous Finns in the nineteenth century. J. V. Snellman, the celebrated creator of Finnish nationalism, worked here in 1843—1847. The well-known authoress Minna Canth spent her life here, and the most famous Finnish author, the master narrator of the people and of the country of

Savo, Juhani Aho, also worked here. At present Kuopio is the centre of intellectual life of the whole of Savo, there are many schools, and a large museum and library. Lately, there has been a revival of business-life, particularly of industry (big mills, a reel factory, match factory, furniture factory, etc), so that the town is now, among inland towns, the next in size after Tampere. The position of the town is beautiful, and tourists have expressed their greatest admiration for Puijo, and Väinölänniemi. From Kuopio, which is the centre of a lively navigation, interesting waterways lead out to the surroundings, among which first of all should be mentioned Tuovilanlahti, in the parish of Maaninka, notable for its beautiful scenery. Tourists intending to go down the rapids of the Oulu river, travel from Kuopio by railway to Kajaani.

Tourists wishing to visit Korkeakoski, can undertake the journey from Kuopio to Tuovilanlahti by the steamer „Maaninka”, and from there by motor-car via Korkeakoski to Iisalmi, where they meet the train. The length of the motor drive is about 40 kilometres.

Thus the boat-trip Savonlinna—Leppävirta—Kuopio has been accomplished. The tourist has travelled through two provinces, five parishes, and stopped at many landing-stages. In less than twenty-four hours, and as if he had been in a cinema, the Summer picture of Savo's cultivation and civilization has been shown to him. In this short time he has been able to see flourishing small towns,



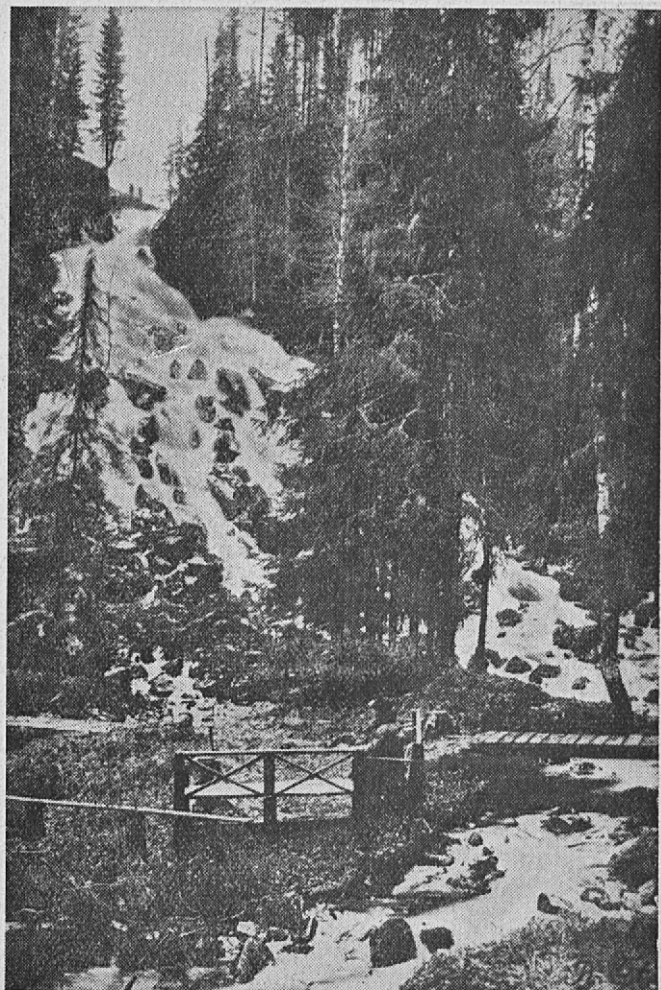
The church village and beach at Leppävirta

cultivated fields witnessing to the existence of old settlements, uninhabited islands, good-natured countryfolk in the town harbours and at the stopping places—and everywhere forests, timber business, and factories where wood, the wealth of Finland changes shape, and is sent out in manufactured form to the world at large.

All these sights framed in the beauties of nature, which so richly endow large and small islands, peninsulas, deep bays, high rocks, and low foliage covered shores lying under the blue Summer sky, display the particular bright charm of the north. Even during the night hours, the tourist remains on deck, resting his eyes upon the changing peaceful scenery. This peace, which in mid-summer rests over our waters, refreshes and soothes, and brings the thought to our minds of the first days of creation „when the Spirit of God rested above the waters“.



Puijo in the Summer.



Korkeakoski at Maaninka (Tuovilanlahti).

